

BULLETIN
OF THE
AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

MATHEMATICAL REVIEWS OFFERS A READING
MACHINE FOR MICROFILM

When the microfilm service of *Mathematical Reviews* was introduced, it was realized that its usefulness would depend to a large extent upon the availability of reading machines. The Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning, a committee of National Research Council, is promoting, among other things, the use of microfilm. As a result of its efforts, a reading machine is being manufactured which will be sold at a retail price of \$32.00. A grant from the Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning has made it possible for *Mathematical Reviews* to distribute a limited number of these machines on the following terms.

Terms of offer. A reading machine for microfilm will be given—as long as the available supply lasts—to any person who has paid his subscription, *at the rate to which he is entitled*, to *Mathematical Reviews* in advance for three years beginning January, 1941. The person who receives a reading machine must pay express charges and import duty, if any, from Buffalo, New York. Until January 1 this offer was made only to the present subscribers to *Mathematical Reviews*. Since that date, however, it is extended to new subscribers also. Because only a limited number of machines is available, anyone who desires one should place an order early.

The purpose of the Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning in affording the financial support making possible the distribution of the readers in connection with subscriptions to *Mathematical Reviews* was jointly the promotion of microfilm and aid to *Mathematical Reviews*.

History of Students Microfilm Reader. The history of the reader, known as the Students Microfilm Reader, begins in the fall of 1939. At that time an advisory group on microphotography to the Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning, composed of Mr. Keyes D. Metcalf (chairman), Director of the Harvard University Library, Professors Ralph D. Bennett and Ernest I. Huntress of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Vernon D. Tate of the National Archives, and Dr. Irvin Stewart (ex officio), Director of the Com-

mittee on Scientific Aids to Learning, was requested to consider the possibilities of designing and making available a simple, inexpensive microfilm reading machine for the use of the individual scholar. The problem was discussed at length and did not appear insoluble. Several designs were suggested, and three models were constructed. Each of these models was thoroughly tested both in the laboratory and in actual use; a set of plans and specifications embodying the final accepted design was prepared for distribution to manufacturers specializing in equipment of this type.

Bids for the manufacture of the reading machine were received from a number of companies, and the Spencer Lens Company was authorized to build a pilot model. It was built, tested and inspected, and the Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning has now signed a contract for a number of these machines. In addition, they will be placed on the market by the Spencer Lens Company.

Purpose of Students Microfilm Reader. Emphasis has been placed throughout on suitability for the purpose for which the reader was designed: simplicity and low cost. No claims are made for extreme convenience, beauty, ready-portability, or universality.

The benefits of microphotography in assembling research data of all types are well known. Facilities exist in the principal libraries, archives, and other institutions for the reproduction of their holdings. Many individuals have secured equipment and microphotographed extensive files. The greatest difficulty to date has not been to secure material on microfilm but rather to obtain adequate utilization equipment. In sponsoring the development of a simple, inexpensive microfilm reader, the Committee on Scientific Aids to Learning has considered solely the requirements of the individual. Excellent equipment developed primarily for commercial and library use is already available on the market. In most cases, it is entirely satisfactory (except for price) for individual use. The Students Microfilm Reader is not intended to compete with any existing reader equipment. It was developed specifically to permit the individual scholar or scientist to utilize in his own study or laboratory microphotographic copies which he may have made personally or procured from one of the existing sources of supply.

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